

Christian Community

A Program Service of the Council for Social Action of the
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and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the
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The Mid-Century White House Conference and the Church

By F. Nelsen Schlegel

Jesus of Nazareth started a revolution when he pushed aside the protests of his disciples and said "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven". The Christian church has inherited his concern for the welfare of the world's children, and it looks with hearty approval upon the achievements of any group which seeks to improve the opportunities for children and youth.

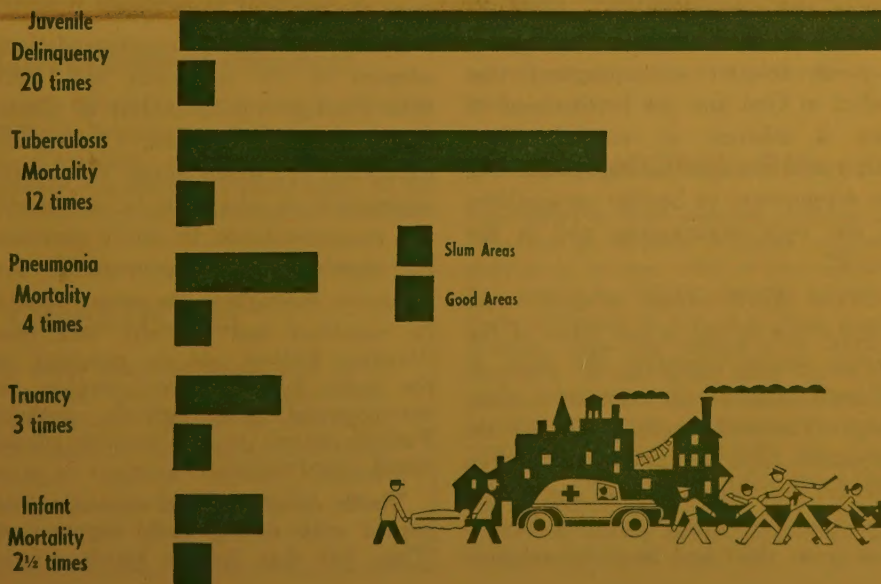
Especially helpful were the first four White House conferences held between 1909 and 1940. The sharing of viewpoints by professional experts and the resulting public opinion and legislation which came out of those conferences marked significant progress in child welfare, and their influence has gone far beyond the confines of the United

States. It is to be expected that the fifth White House Conference, held in December of last year, will be even more significant. The church did not have much to do with the earlier White House Conferences, but there was a great deal of church leadership in this last one, both in the preliminary studies which went on for two years prior to December, and in the conference itself. Hundreds of church-related delegates took part in preparing the platform recommendations, and the "Pledge to Children", which are now receiving careful attention in scores of little White House Conferences all over the nation.

The whole challenge of the mid-century conference was a religious one. The 5000 conferees, who came from

Poor housing means poor chances for children

A comparison of 4 slum areas and 4 good areas in Chicago shows these conditions:



all walks of life—teachers, ministers, doctors, psychologists, labor leaders, government officials, PTA leaders, students, and just ordinary parents — were not concerned with children and youth merely because there is a need for manpower and for increased production of goods. They were there because they were concerned about the infinite worth of a growing personality. In the words of the National Committee the whole purpose of the program was “to consider how we can develop in children the mental, emotional, and spiritual qualities essential to individual happiness and to responsible citizenship, and what physical, economic and social conditions are deemed necessary to this development”.

People of all religious faiths (and of no faith) were given ample opportunity to consider the place of the church and the synagogue in attaining this purpose. Two of the 35 work groups were especially involved with religious emphases. One of them talked over “the role of the church in the development of healthy personality”, and the other studied “spiritual values and healthy personality development”.

Young people were well represented in the conference, and they took an active part in the work groups. In the work group that dealt with spiritual values several representatives of an ethical culture society insisted that spiritual values are merely the highest in human and cultural values. After the debate had gone on for some time it was a youth delegate who proposed that “belief in God and the brotherhood of man is inherent in our American society and has spiritual significance for the development of healthy personalities in our own communities and in the world”.

Many church-related delegates were disappointed by the action taken in the closing session regarding the place of religious education in community planning. The conference agreed that the estimated 50% of American children who are not now exposed to any formal program of religious education have a God-given right and need for religious

training in order to attain healthy personality and responsible citizenship. But every effort to secure a recommendation favoring “released time” or other forms of week-day religious education met with failure. It appeared that the opposition was led by Hebrew and non-sectarian groups, who succeeded in securing acceptance of a recommendation which read:

“Recognizing that knowledge and understanding of religious and ethical concepts are essential to the development of spiritual values, and that nothing is of greater importance to the moral and spiritual health of our nation than the work of religious education in our homes and families, and in our institutions of organized religion, we nevertheless strongly affirm the principle of separation of church and state which has been the keystone of our American democracy, and declare ourselves unalterably opposed to the use of the public schools, directly or indirectly, for religious educational purposes”.

It should be noted, however, that, despite the action indicated here, the conference unanimously adopted the line in the “Pledge to Children” which reads “We will provide you with all opportunities possible to develop your own faith in God”. The conference was notable for its interest in religion, and the conviction that churches need to improve all their efforts and programs to meet the needs of these times.

Many of the 67 recommendations adopted by the conference will meet with the approval of leaders in Christian social action. Take, e.g., recommendation 17, which urges “that racial segregation in education be abolished” and recommendation 16, which expresses the conviction that opportunities for education throughout the nation should be equalized and specially asks that “further Federal aid be provided to the states for educational services, in tax-supported public schools, without Federal control, to help equalize educational opportunity”.

Youth delegates were especially concerned with ending racial segregation. They felt that subject keenly, partly

because the Washington pattern of racial segregation outside of government-owned institutions seemed to make it necessary for many of the young people to find housing in army barracks at Fort Myer in Arlington, Virginia. They helped to get the conference's endorsement of a recommendation approving the President's Commission on Civil Rights “because it represents our faith in and practice of democracy”, and urging “that prompt steps be taken to eliminate all types of racial and religious segregation”.

In its concern for healthy personality development the conference expressed much interest in national housing problems. A book of 75 charts, prepared by the National Committee, made graphic many of the social and economic factors which affect children and youth. Among these were several which pointed up our national housing needs, and their effect upon health and juvenile delinquency. One such study showed how in one large city juvenile delinquency is twenty times as great in four slum areas as it is in four good ones in the same city. Truancy is three times as great in the slum areas; tuberculosis mortality twelve times as high; and infant mortality two and a half times as great. The conference declared that healthy personality development demands a sound national housing program. By 1960, it said, we will need more than 17,000,000 new and improved dwelling units. Among other things it urged that “the construction of 810,000 low-rent public housing units should proceed at full speed in order to provide much needed housing for low-income families now living in slums”.

Church leaders can feel encouraged by the attitude which prevailed through the entire conference, and by the tenor of the platform recommendations. But the effect of the Mid-century White House Conference will not be felt immediately. From this point many state and community committees must plan continuing programs until the “Pledge to Children” and the platform recommendations receive nation-wide attention and enter into community thinking. The church will need to take a leading part in this whole educational process.

The official conference proceedings, the fact finding report, the chart book, and other documents relating to the conference may be secured from Health Publications Institute, Inc., Raleigh, North Carolina. They may also be borrowed from the Service Library, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia 2, Pa.

Quick Reference Notes For Your Work in

CHURCH AND ECONOMIC LIFE

These notes are intended to serve you throughout the year. Listed for instant reference are addresses of church, labor, and management offices; a selected group of publications in the area of church and economic life; and program suggestions for local church groups.

Religious Organizations:

DEPARTMENT OF CHURCH AND ECONOMIC LIFE, National Council of Churches, 297 4th Avenue, New York 10, NY. The Rev. Cameron P. Hall, executive director. Use this address to request the Department's literature or services.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS OFFICE, Council for Social Action, 2431 W. 175th St., Homewood, Illinois. The Rev. Francis W. McPeck, secretary. For information on CSA programs.

PRESBYTERIAN INSTITUTE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS, Labor Temple, 214 East 14th Street, New York. The Rev. Marshall Scott, director. For information on institutes for urban church leadership.

NATIONAL RELIGION AND LABOR FOUNDATION, 70 Pryor Street SW, Atlanta, Georgia. Plans and programs for clergy-labor fellowships. The Rev. Witherpoon Dodge, acting secretary.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE, 1312 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington 5, D.C. The Rev. George G. Higgins. For materials on the "industry council" plan and for those on Roman Catholic economic thought.

NOTE: The central office of the Commission on Christian Social Action (the Rev. Huber F. Klemme, executive secretary) is located at 2969 W. 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio; that of the Council for Social Action (the Rev. Ray Gibbons, director) at 289 4th Avenue, New York 10, New York.

Economic Organizations:

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR, 901 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington 1, D.C. Publishes **LABOR'S MONTHLY SURVEY** at \$1.00 a year (AFL policy statements and economic discussions) and **THE FEDERATIONIST**.

COMMITTEE FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, 444 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N. Y. A group of American business leaders sponsoring economic research projects. National policy statements, issued from time to time, are free in single copies.

CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS, 718 Jackson Place NW, Washington 6, D.C. Publishes **ECONOMIC OUTLOOK** at \$1.50 a year (CIO department of education and research studies), the weekly **CIO NEWS** at \$1.00 a year.

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE BOARD, 247 Park Avenue, New York 17, N. Y. A business research group publishing a wide variety of reports.

NATIONAL PLANNING ASSOCIATION, 800 21st Street, NW, Washington 6, D.C. A voluntary association of business, professional, and labor leaders engaging in economic research and planning. Publishes case studies at \$1.00 each on "The Causes of Industrial Peace Under Collective Bargaining," regional economic studies, and other materials.

THE CO-OPERATIVE LEAGUE OF THE U. S. A., 343 So. Dearborn Street, Chicago 4, Illinois. Jerry Voorhis, executive secretary. News service and information on consumer and other co-operatives.

Government Offices:

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMIC REPORT, Washington, D.C., Senator Joseph C. O'Mahoney, chairman. Publishes the semi-annual majority-minority report on the Presidential recommendations for legislative

Labor Sunday Message

Copies of the Labor Sunday Message, issued by the National Council of Churches, are available from the Department of the Church and Economic Life, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y., at 5 cents each, \$1.85 per hundred.

action to sustain the economy, special staff reports on various economic problems. Committee prints are free.

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS, United States Senate, Washington, D.C., Senator John Sparkman, chairman. Publishes hearings and reports on problems affecting small and medium size business units.

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE, U. S. Senate, Washington, D.C. A SUB-COMMITTEE ON LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS, Senator James E. Murray, chairman, publishes investigative hearings on selected industries. Full transcripts of the hearings and summary reports usually available.

NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD, Washington, D.C. Publishes weekly summaries of cases decided by the Board's examiners and by the Board (free), quarterly reports on the Board's business, and general information on the administration of Taft-Hartley (Labor-Management Relations Act of 1947).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR, Washington, D.C. Publishes the authoritative **LABOR'S MONTHLY REVIEW**. The **WOMAN'S BUREAU** and the **CHILDREN'S BUREAU** prepare a number of studies each year dealing with female and juvenile employment problems. The Bureau of Labor Standards publishes a monthly resume of state laws proposed or adopted dealing with all phases of employment. In general, single copies of all publications are free.

Local and State Offices:

Information on local economic problems can often best be obtained in offices commonly maintained in large cities or state capitals. The **CENTRAL TRADE UNION COUNCIL** is the affiliation of A.F. of L. labor organizations, while the **INDUSTRIAL UNION COUNCIL** is the same thing for C.I.O. groups. Employers are represented through **MANUFACTURERS or TRADE ASSOCIATIONS**, and the **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**. Public offices under the **STATE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR** offer accurate reports on health, safety, wage-hour, and other conditions of work.

TALK OVER YOUR QUESTIONS . . .

about program materials and personnel, or about economic issues, with CSA's industrial relations secretary **FRANCIS W. McPECK** (2431 W. 175, Homewood, Illinois). His weekly newsletter—**LABOR LETTER**—is available on written request. There is no subscription price for this newsletter, but annual contributions toward costs are welcomed. The Rev. **SHIRLEY GREENE** (Merom, Indiana) agricultural relations secretary of CSA, publishes a monthly newsletter called **CHRISTIAN AGRICULTURE**, also available under the above conditions.

"OLD DEALERS" BID FOR PROTESTANTISM

Here is the story behind the promotion of John T. Flynn's *The Road Ahead*. The May issue of *Social Action* describes the activities of a variety of organizations, far to the political and economic "right," that are seeking to influence Protestantism in America.

Read a forthright statement of the point of view set forth by the Committee for Constitutional Government, the Foundation for Economic Education, Spiritual Mobilization, *Christian Economics*, and *Christian Beacon*.

The documented research tells the resources of six pressure groups and also describes their methods of influencing Protestant leaders. The well-financed campaign of resurgent conservatism has important implications for your Protestant religion and for current American politics.

Copies are available for 15c each from the Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

In growing importance and numbers are the departments of industrial relations in both private and public colleges and universities. Not only are their studies of great value, but **THEY CAN PROVIDE EXPERIENCED AND COMPETENT DISCUSSION-LEADERSHIP** for your church programs.

Local Church Program Suggestions:

In general, we recommend the **PROGRAM SOURCE BOOK** (Department of Church and Economic Life, National Council of Churches, 20-cents) for stimulating program ideas in the field of Christianity and economic or industrial problems. The **PROGRAM SOURCE BOOK** lists films, radio programs, and all denominational publications relating to economic life. For major conferences, following the Detroit pattern, help in enlisting leadership personnel will be given by the Rev. Cameron P. Hall and his staff.

We suggest:

- (1) That you order enough copies of the "Labor Sunday Message," a copy of which is enclosed, to distribute to your congregation and church school classes on Labor Sunday (September 2 or September 9). Call attention to it in the service or sermon. Request local editors to publish it.
- (2) That during the year—possibly during the early January "Church and Economic Life Week"—you arrange one or more programs dealing with Christian vocation, labor-management relations, or some theme on the Christian responsibility for economic justice.

- (3) That you devote part of your church pamphlet rack to publications of the National Council and the denominations, and keep them up-to-date.
- (4) That for class study you use the May, 1951, pamphlet, entitled, "The National Council of Churches Views its Task in Christian Life and Work." (15-cents). "It analyzes in a clear way basic factors in the problems we face, and it relates fundamentally, challengingly, and clearly our Christian philosophy and insight to major problems in the field of social action."

Further, we suggest:

- (1) That an effort be made to form a small discussion group in your congregation of Christians in various occupations. Major aim of such groups is to discuss working experiences, and the Christian attitude toward them.
- (2) That clergy-labor fellowships be formed, for occasional meetings and exchange of point of view. The same with business personnel.
- (3) That ministers and other church leaders devote as much of their study-time this year as possible to the problems of economic organization, labor - management relations, trade union topics, and related matters. **THE TIMES CALL FOR SERIOUS, - WIDE-SPREAD STUDY TO REPLACE SECULAR AND EMOTIONAL OPINIONS WITH TRULY CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES.**

Statement On World Affairs

A major statement on international affairs by the Council for Social Action was published in the first July issue of *Advance*. The statement covers the following subjects: The United States and Korea, the U. S. and Russia, the U. S. and Asia, the U. S. and Western Europe, the U. S. and the United Nations.

Reprints are available from the Council for Social Action at the following rates: single copies, free; 2 to 49 copies, five cents each; 50 or more copies, three cents each.

Survey of Community Groups

The Institute of Adult Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, desires names of persons to report self-organized community groups for solving local problems. Information and a return card are enclosed for Congregational Christian recipients of this issue.

Our Contributors

The Reverend F. Nelsen Schlegel, pastor of First Evangelical and Reformed Church, Washington, D. C., is a member of the Commission on Christian Social Action and one of the delegates of the Evangelical and Reformed Church at the White House Conference. He is also a member of the Legislative Committee of the Council for Social Action.

The Reference Notes and Program Suggestions for action in the area of the church and economic life have been prepared by the Reverend Francis McPeck, Industrial Relations Secretary of the Council for Social Action.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Additional copies may be obtained for 2 cents each. Requests from Congregational Christians should be addressed to Ray Gibbons, Director, Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.